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USSR WEEKLY REVIEW

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CONTENTS

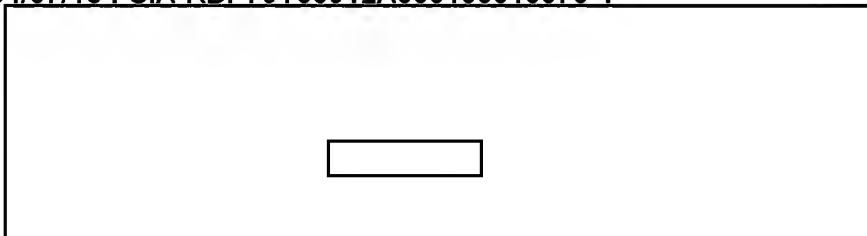
Moscow's Reaction to the Rhodesian Settlement	1
Moscow and the Arab World: The Diplomatic Process	5

25X1

This publication is prepared by the USSR Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the National Foreign Assessment Center. The views presented are the personal judgments of analysts on significant events or trends in Soviet foreign and domestic affairs. Although the analysis centers on political matters, it discusses politically relevant economic or strategic trends when appropriate. Differences of opinion are sometimes aired to present consumers with a range of analytical views. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles or to

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Moscow's Reaction to the Rhodesian Settlement

The decision of Zimbabwe African People's Union leader Joshua Nkomo--with the support of the frontline presidents and the leaders of other important African states--to reject the Rhodesian internal settlement probably was well received in Moscow and Havana. Moscow is expected to increase its military assistance and has already launched a propaganda campaign endorsing Nkomo's stand and denouncing the settlement. Over the longer term, the level and character of Soviet assistance will be primarily influenced by the degree of support accorded Nkomo by the frontline presidents and Moscow's assessment of Nkomo's prospects for success. Geographical constraints and ZAPU capabilities may cause Moscow to be cautious about the degree of its commitment, but--in the wake of their success in Angola and Ethiopia--the Soviets are psychologically prepared for additional involvement in Africa. Only a very strong reaction from the West is likely to alter that mood.

Constraints in Southern Africa

Moscow's credibility as a supporter of revolutionary movements and its ability to transport personnel and equipment to Third World trouble spots has been demonstrated in Angola and Ethiopia. A major effort to increase deliveries to ZAPU, however, presents serious problems--some beyond Moscow's ability to control--which the Soviets did not encounter in Angola and Ethiopia. Any major buildup of equipment would be difficult to arrange because ZAPU does not control any territory. Moscow can presumably continue to send supplies by sea to Luanda and Dar es Salaam, from where they can be transported overland to ZAPU camps in Zambia and Angola. The Angolan route, over which most of the equipment would have to be moved, involves very difficult terrain, and the Cuban-protected convoys will face the added hazard of passing through rebel-held territory, which would increase the possibility of equipment loss and Cuban casualties. An airlift to

9 March 1978

SECRET

Lusaka would overcome these obstacles, but Zambia already restricts the number of non-Africans it allows to work with ZAPU and is not likely to be enthusiastic about increasing their number to accommodate a major arms buildup.

President Kaunda is a major supporter of Nkomo, but there are disadvantages for him in an expanded Soviet-Cuban presence in Zambia.

- He is already under heavy pressure from his party to abandon his preoccupation with the Rhodesian problem and turn his attention to serious domestic economic and social problems.
- Kaunda himself is reluctant to allow ZAPU to launch large-scale military operations against Rhodesia, primarily out of fear of Rhodesian retaliation. Therefore, he may allow some acceleration in the pace of Soviet-Cuban involvement with ZAPU inside Zambia, but is unlikely to give ZAPU all they want.

Even if the logistic barriers and political constraints involved in preparing ZAPU troops in Zambia can be overcome, it will be difficult to infiltrate these forces into Rhodesia because of the obstacles presented by the Zambezi River and Lake Kariba, which make up the border between the two countries. Botswana and Mozambique offer more attractive infiltration routes, and ZAPU is now taking some steps to exploit them. Neither government has been as close to Nkomo as Kaunda's. Botswana is not likely to allow the presence of Soviets and Cubans on its territory or permit additional ZAPU camps to be opened. For its part Mozambique might be willing to allow a gradual buildup if it can be portrayed as a demonstration of Patriotic Front unity as opposed to direct support for Nkomo.

In any event, the capacity of ZAPU to absorb a rapid increase in the level of support in the short term is questionable. Most ZAPU troops lack combat experience and, despite Soviet-Cuban training efforts, often do poorly in clashes with Rhodesian security forces.

9 March 1978

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To support an expanded guerrilla war, ZAPU will need additional weapons, instructors, and advisers as well as air defense equipment and additional combat units--probably Cuban--to defend its camps from Rhodesian raids. Nkomo can count on Cuban support for a wider war, as Castro has been trying to increase his role in the Rhodesian imbroglio since 1976 and has the military personnel to support an expanded effort. He is likely to be reluctant to commit major combat units to ZAPU, however, as long as increasing numbers of Cuban forces are needed in Ethiopia. Given the realities of ZAPU's capabilities as a fighting force, a large-scale, short-term buildup would be of dubious value.

It is possible, however, that Nkomo might favor a more conventional operation against Rhodesia instead of a continued guerrilla war. ZAPU has the manpower, but a credible conventional force will require extensive Soviet-Cuban support, particularly in air defense and such sophisticated weapons as artillery and armor. It will take more than a year to assemble and train such a force, and even then it will not be a match for the Rhodesian military.

Presumably, neither the Soviets nor the Cubans are likely to encourage a conventional operation, particularly as long as they are heavily involved in Ethiopia. Moreover, both would weigh the possibility of South African intervention to frustrate a conventional attack against Rhodesia. South African involvement would raise the prospect of a wider conflict and would increase the risks to the Cubans, who would bear the burden of combat support.

US Reaction

US complaints are not likely to deter policymakers in Moscow and Havana from increasing their support for Nkomo. They resisted US pressures on Angola and Ethiopia and gained additional credit with African militants in the process. They probably believe that this experience can be repeated in Rhodesia, particularly since they recognize that the US will want to avoid appearing to back the white Rhodesian minority. Moscow will monitor the US reaction to be sure that the most important aspects of its US relations are not seriously damaged over Rhodesia.

9 March 1978

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Moscow is likely to conclude that the US will be reluctant to link important bilateral issues such as SALT to Rhodesian developments.

The Outlook

The logistic and political difficulties in southern Africa and the realities of ZAPU's capabilities suggest that support from Moscow and Havana for Nkomo will not increase dramatically in the short term. What we are likely to see is additional support for some level of guerrilla activity--and possibly terrorism--inside Rhodesia to keep attention focused on the area and give Moscow the opportunity to exploit the situation for its propaganda value.

The Soviet-Cuban commitment is long-term, however, and will involve a gradual increase in the amount of equipment sent to ZAPU and a determined effort to improve the combat capabilities of ZAPU troops. This is likely to involve some increase in the number of Soviet and Cuban advisers and instructors in Africa and possibly larger numbers of ZAPU trainees sent to the Soviet Union and Cuba. Moscow will not commit any combat troops and will probably limit the number of advisers it allows to operate with combat units. As the training effort begins to make an impact, the delivery of sophisticated weapons will increase.

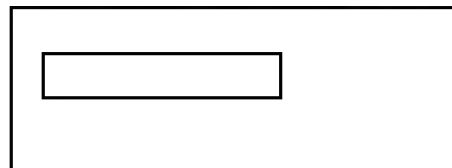
It will take 6 to 12 months, at a minimum, to get ZAPU forces in shape for a serious effort against the Rhodesian armed forces and much longer if a credible conventional force is to be created.

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9 March 1978

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Moscow and the Arab World: The Diplomatic Process

The current impasse between Egypt and Israel may be finally working to Moscow's advantage in the Middle East. A flurry of diplomatic activity between the USSR and several Arab states during January and February revealed:

- A willingness by the USSR and Algeria to move toward more explicit support for each other's positions on the Horn of Africa and Western Sahara.
- Increased military cooperation between the USSR and South Yemen to enhance support for Ethiopia.
- Some progress in furthering Soviet-Libyan relations.
- A drawing together of the Soviets and Syrians on a variety of political issues.

PLO leader Yasir Arafat's arrival in Moscow on Monday means that the USSR has now touched base with every member of the Arab opposition except Iraq.

The current round of diplomatic activity is reminiscent of Soviet summitry nearly three years ago when Washington failed to achieve a second Sinai disengagement. This led to high-level Soviet discussions with heads of state and foreign ministers from Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Libya. Neither then nor now have the Soviets used the diplomatic process to suggest a Soviet initiative to break the impasse in the Middle East. Instead the Soviets are demonstrating their refusal to sit idly by during another round of US shuttle diplomacy and, unlike the April-May 1975 period, the Soviets are now more concerned with wooing the anti-Sadat forces than with searching for a reconciliation with Egypt.

9 March 1978

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Glossing Over Differences With Algeria

President Boumediene's visit to Moscow from 12-14 January was the beginning of the Soviet effort to rally the Arab "progressives" against Egyptian President Sadat. The Algerian President was presumably eager to visit the USSR in the wake of French military intervention in the Western Sahara, which helped to tip the balance against the Algerian-backed Polisario Front. For their part the Soviets were taking advantage of the negative reaction to Sadat's political initiatives to strengthen their relations with members of the Arab resistance front.

As a result, both sides were willing to paper over their differences and, for the first time, provide high-level political backing for each other's policies in other areas of concern. For example, the Soviets traded qualified support of Algerian policies in the Western Sahara for equally qualified Algerian support of Soviet policies in the Horn. Both the Soviets and Algerians had hitherto avoided getting directly and publicly involved in these controversies because of Moscow's unwillingness to irritate the Moroccans and Algiers' interest in not challenging other members of the Arab League.

The Soviets have endorsed Boumediene's visits to various Arab capitals in January to mobilize opposition to Sadat's peace initiatives as well as his willingness to attend the Tripoli summit of hard-line Arab states in December and play host to a second summit the following month.

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Algeria has recently received substantial military assistance from the USSR, and the atmospherics of the Boumediene visit indicated that military aid was a major topic of discussion. The communique winding up the visit referred to cooperation in "all fields," a euphemism for military assistance.

Several weeks before the Algerian President's arrival in Moscow, Soviet First Deputy Defense Minister Ogarkov met with his Algerian counterparts and with Boumediene in Algeria to discuss new Soviet arms shipments. Soviet media reported that Ogarkov subsequently

9 March 1978

accompanied Boumediene on visits to air force garrisons and military units in the Moscow area, where the Algerian President "inspected equipment and weaponry." It is very unusual for the tightlipped Soviets to admit openly their Arab visitors' interest in Soviet hardware. Moscow will presumably continue to be generous in handling Algerian aid requests.

Moving Closer to South Yemen

The USSR has been the PDRY's principal source of weapons and military training for the past 10 years, and as a consequence of Moscow's change in allies in the Horn of Africa, the Soviet interest in Aden has become more intense. Soviet use of Aden's port and airport facilities has increased, and Moscow has made greater use of overflight rights in order to expand its presence in Ethiopia.

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the time in the discussions with Hasani was devoted to the situation in the Horn. He conceded that the visit was designed to promote military cooperation and indicated that military aid to South Yemen would be increased. He also implied that the PDRY would be granted a moratorium on the interest on its debt to the USSR as well as given a longer term to repay the principal.

The particularly warm remarks exchanged by Hasani and Premier Kosygin suggest that the two sides were also looking for ways to institutionalize their closer relations. Both sides have denied that they were considering the signing of a treaty of friendship and cooperation, but it is nevertheless possible that Aden and Moscow will move toward signing a declaration of political principles or establishing closer party ties. Current agreements between the Soviet Communist Party and the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola could be a model for the latter; Soviet consultation agreements with France could be an example for the former.

9 March 1978

In any case, the absence of a more formal relationship has neither prevented Moscow from increasing its activities in the PDRY nor Aden from increasing its support for the Soviet-Cuban presence in Ethiopia. The Soviets will probably continue to press for a formal agreement to deal with their use of military facilities in Aden, but there is no evidence that such an agreement has been signed. The South Yemenis--sensitive about their sovereignty--have always turned aside such requests.

Dialogue of Opportunism between the USSR and Libya

The visit to Moscow by President Qadhafi's deputy, Major Abd al-Salam Jallud was clearly intended to worry Cairo. The Soviets view their Libyan connection both as a means of pressuring Sadat to repair relations with the USSR and as an alternative to limited Soviet influence on Egypt. The Libyans are pleased that their growing ties with the Soviets produce discomfiture in Cairo, particularly in the wake of Sadat's initiatives toward Jerusalem.

Thus the Soviets used the Jallud visit from 14-22 February to underline their continued displeasure with the Egyptian-Israeli peace process. At a dinner for Jallud, Kosygin denounced Sadat's approach as harmful to Arab interests; their joint communique condemned Egypt's "capitulatory" policy toward Israel.

The visit suggested that Jallud's heavy schedule of talks with Kosygin and other high Soviet economic and defense officials made some progress in furthering Soviet-Libyan relations. The joint statement winding up the talks expressed the mutual intention to expand bilateral cooperation in "all areas" (an obvious reference to military assistance) and indicated that Jallud's visit imparted "new momentum" toward consolidating Soviet-Libyan ties. Libyan references to a "great leap forward" and to the "principled nature of their relations" could presage a formal agreement or protocol on consultations, similar to Soviet arrangements with France, Canada, and the UK.

Jallud's stay in Moscow overlapped the visit by Syrian President Asad, who was in Moscow from 20-23 February, and probably involved tripartite talks on Libyan financing of Syrian purchases of Soviet arms.

9 March 1978

25X1

[REDACTED] Syrian officials have denied, however, that Jallud joined the Soviet-Syrian discussions.

Despite the ostensible success of the Jallud visit, the Soviets have never had any illusions about the tenuous nature of their popularity in Libya and are presumably aware that there is some opposition in Tripoli to Qadhafi's increasingly close relations with the USSR. Soviet-Libyan relations will therefore continue to expand, but only gradually and with mutual caution.

High-Level Attention for Asad

Syria has been a focal point of Soviet policy in the Middle East in the wake of Moscow's deteriorating relations with Egypt. During this period the Soviets have survived a period of serious political friction with the Syrians over Damascus' intervention against the Palestinians in Lebanon, the possibility of closer Syrian-Egyptian relations, and Asad's threat to deny the Soviet squadron in the Mediterranean the use of facilities at Tartus. During Asad's previous visit to the USSR in April 1977, Syrian media stressed Damascus' independence in its relations with the Soviets and its "balanced relationship" between the two superpowers.

Soviet-Syrian relations are far warmer at this juncture. Asad received a warm welcome and appropriate protocol during his relatively brief visit. Soviet media noted that "joint, parallel action" had been discussed to strengthen Soviet-Syrian relations, an unusual formulation that suggested some type of joint political initiative. Syrian media, in a marked shift since the last Asad visit, emphasized the Soviet role as a "strategic ally" rather than stressing Syrian independence, which probably reflects Damascus' sense of isolation in the Arab world since the Egyptian peace initiative began. Finally, the reference in the Soviet-Syrian communique to the development of Syria's defense capability was unusually generous.

9 March 1978

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Several days after Asad's return from Moscow, Syrian Army Chief of Staff Major General Hikmat Shihabi arrived in Moscow, presumably to discuss the details of a major new arms agreement that was negotiated by Shihabi in the USSR in December. Syria has been seeking more advanced Soviet weapons to help offset the growing gap in modern weaponry between Syria and Israel, and Moscow has reportedly agreed to supply additional surface-to-air missiles, an unspecified number of T-62 tanks, and a squadron of MIG-23 fighter aircraft. The arrival of more sophisticated military equipment could lead to an increase in the number of Soviet advisers--who now total about 2,200--in Syria.

In return for Soviet military assistance--which suggests an even heavier Syrian reliance on the Soviets in the near term--Asad was willing to support several Soviet positions in the Middle East and Africa. Retreating from his implied criticism of Soviet policy on the Horn during a dinner given in his honor, Asad agreed to a communique that denounced "imperialist interference in the Horn of Africa." The communique also contained harsh language directed against the Egyptians, although Asad's banquet remarks dealing with Sadat had been notably moderate. The communique's references to the importance of Soviet participation in a Middle East settlement "at all stages" as well as the emphasis on Soviet-Arab cooperation and "coordination" of actions by all progressive forces were also to Moscow's liking.

Soviet Tactics in the Near Term

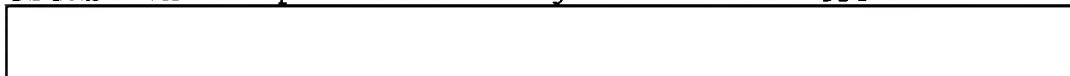
Moscow's use of the diplomatic process in the Arab World during the past two months strongly suggests that:

- The USSR is clearly encouraging an anti-Sadat, anti-US front of Arab states.
- The Soviets and their Arab clients have decided that it is in their interest to forget their differences on a variety of substantive matters in order to create an image of solidarity.

9 March 1978

- Moscow is planning no diplomatic initiative in the Middle East at this time, but is merely trying to show that a lasting settlement would be very difficult without Soviet cooperation.
- The Soviets are not counting on recent Egyptian hints about the desirability of better ties between them to have any significant results and are unwilling to ease their polemical assaults against Sadat.

Some improvement in relations with Egypt is certainly desired by the Soviets, but recent high-level Soviet criticism of Sadat could complicate efforts to establish a diplomatic dialogue with the Egyptians.



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9 March 1978

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